DC

VERTIGO

NO. 73
DEC 95

£1.50 UK

SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

# the SANDMAN™

Neil Gaiman

DAVE MCKEAN

FOR A *START*, WE NEVER EVEN *NOTICED* THE RENAISSANCE. THE RENAISSANCE WAS A LOAD OF BLOODY ITALIANS PONCING AROUND CLAIMING TO BE THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE GREEKS COME AROUND AGAIN.

ROBBIE...

NOBODY IN ENGLAND HAD EVEN *HEARD* OF THE RENAISSANCE UNTIL IT HAD BEEN OVER FOR CENTURIES.

ANYWAY. THAT'S ALL BESIDE THE POINT.

ONE WAY ONLY

7AM 9PM

SO, WHAT *IS* YOUR POINT?

JUST THAT *THIS* HAS AS MUCH TO DO WITH THE PAST AS *I* HAVE TO DO WITH, I DUNNO, *HEDGEHOGS*.

I'VE GOT YOUR *PASS* HERE ...SOMEWHERE...

IT'S JUST SOMEONE'S IDEA OF THE ENGLISH MIDDLE AGES CROSSED WITH BLOODY *DISNEY-LAND*.

LAYOFF, ROBBIE. ANYWAY. IF YOU *KNOW* YOU WON'T LIKE IT, WHY ARE YOU COMING OUT HERE WITH ME?

OH GOOD. GOT IT.

I DUNNO. WHY DO PEOPLE SLOW DOWN TO LOOK AT CAR CRASHES?

BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SEE IF SOMEONE'S *DEAD*, AND THEY WANT TO BE *SURE* IT'S NOT *THEM*.

WHICH HAS *NOTHING* TO DO WITH SPENDING A SUNDAY HAVING FUN. *RIGHT*?

ADMIT ONE

HERE WE GO.
RIGHT, ROBBIE, STAND GUARD. AND TURN AROUND WHILE YOU'RE DOING IT.
BUT--
UH-*UH*. NO PEEKING.
AH WELL. ONE MORE YEAR AS A LADY OF THE COURT. YOU KNOW WHAT *I* WISH, ROBBIE?
HAVEN'T A *CLUE*, LOVE.
YO HO HO, GUENEVERE.
WHO'S *THAT*? IS THAT *YOU*, GERRY?
SURE IS.
I WISH THEY'D MAKE ME *QUEEN*. I COULD BE A REALLY *COOL* QUEEN.
WELL, WHY DON'T YOU TELL THE ORGANIZERS?
C'MON, ROBBIE. THERE *WEREN'T* ANY BLACK QUEENS OF ENGLAND.
CATHERINE OF ARAGON.
*SHE* WASN'T BLACK. SHE WAS *SPANISH*.
THERE WERE A LOT OF MOORS AND AFRICANS IN SPAIN AND ITALY IN THE OLD DAYS. REMEMBER *OTHELLO*? TRUST ME, IF CATHERINE OF ARAGON HAD BEEN IN ALABAMA IN THE 1950'S THEY'D HAVE MADE HER RIDE IN THE BACK OF THE BUS.
ROBBIE, YOU'RE *SO FULL* OF IT.
NAH. I THINK YOU'D MAKE A *GREAT* QUEEN.
ROBBIE... IT'S NOT HISTORICAL.
*HISTORICAL*? FROM WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME, *NOTHING* IN THIS BLOODY PLACE IS HISTORICAL.
YOU CAN TURN AROUND NOW, ROBBIE, LACE ME UP.
*OOF*. GENTLY.
I'VE GOT A GOOD MIND TO GO AND TALK TO THE ORGANIZERS.
*NO*, YOU DON'T.
...I *MIGHT* DO.

THERE YOU GO, MISTER GADLING.

PRITHEE, MILORD, HOW DOST I LOOK?

THOU LOOK'ST PASSING FAIR, MILADY, EXCEPST THOU MANGLEST THE QUEEN'S GOOD ENGLISH AND YOUR TITS ARE HANGING OUT.

YOU DON'T HAVE A ROMANTIC BONE IN YOUR BODY, ROBBIE. WHAT ABOUT THE MAGIC OF THE PAST?

BOLLOCKS TO THE MAGIC OF THE PAST.

HEY ***GUENEVERE!*** CHECK ***THIS*** OUT! I'M CALLING HIM LAMBKIN THE HUMILIATOR. HE INSULTS PEOPLE.

Eyyy, you are the daughter of a she-camel and a water-bison. You smell of stagnant ponds and your, um, dandruff is... um... very bad...

***CUTE,*** DAVE. I THINK IF I WERE YOU I'D STICK TO "BAA!"

bah!

ALL RIGHT, NOW, ROBBIE, REMEMBER, THROUGH THAT DOOR I'M ***NOT*** GUENEVERE. I'M LADY CONSTANCE DU LAC.

IF YOU ***SAY*** SO, LOVE.

AND ***TRY*** NOT TO LOOK SO MUCH LIKE A BOYFRIEND.

NO PROBLEM. I'LL LOOK JUST LIKE ONE OF THE PUNTERS.

BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WE OUGHT TO DO ***FIRST...***

AFTER YOU, GOOD LADY CONSTANCE.

THANK YOU, MY GOOD SIR ROBERT GADLING.

Soup

Beer

COOK

# The Wake: An Epilogue
# Sunday Mourning

*Written by Neil Gaiman*
*Art by Michael Zulli*
*Lettered by Todd Klein*
*Colored by Daniel Vozzo*
*Seps by Digital Chameleon*
*Edited by Karen Berger*
*Associated by Shelly Roeberg*
*Sandman characters created by Gaiman, Kieth & Dringenberg*

WHICH REMINDS ME. I HEARD SOMETHING REALLY COOL YESTERDAY. IT SEEMS THERE REALLY ***WAS*** A ***SIR*** ROBERT GADLING.

OH YEAH?

***YEAH.*** I THOUGHT YOU'D BE ***EXCITED.*** YOU COULD BE ***RELAT-ED*** OR SOMETHING.

COULD BE.

ANYWAY, I HEARD ABOUT IT FROM ONE OF THE CRAFTERS. HINNEGAN THE BOOK-BINDER. HE WANTS TO MEET YOU.

DID HE SAY ANYTHING ***ELSE*** ABOUT THIS GADLING?

***NOT*** MUCH. JUST THAT THERE WERE A COUPLE OF THEM WITH THE SAME NAME.

LET ME SEE. ***ONE*** OF THEM WAS A PRINTER AND A BOOK-PUBLISHER. THE ***OTHER*** OWNED A FLEET OF SHIPS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

A SLAVER.

...MAYBE. HINNEGAN DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.

A SLAVER. ***CHRIST,*** GWEN. ***I'M*** SORRY...

DON'T START THAT CRAZY STUFF AGAIN, ROBBIE.

BUT YOU CAN'T JUST ***FOR-GET*** ABOUT IT.

***SURE*** YOU CAN, ROBBIE. YOU KNOW ***HOW?*** YOU JUST ***FORGET*** ABOUT IT. ANYWAY, IT'S ***THIS*** COUNTRY THAT'S MEANT TO BE HUNG UP ON SLAVERY. NOT ***YOURS.***

WELL, ***THIS*** IS WHERE A LOT OF THE SLAVES WOUND UP. BUT YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THE REAL PROBLEM WAS THE SLAVE TRADE. AND ***THAT*** WAS ***ENGLISH.*** I MEAN, ***WE*** DIDN'T START IT--THAT WAS THE SPANISH-- BUT WE WERE THE ***BEST*** AT IT.

ONE OF THOSE LITTLE SPINACH PIE-THINGS, PLEASE, LOVE.

HUZZAH! TWENTY POUNDS FOR THE KING!

KERRIST.

HITHER, MY LORD. I HOPEST THAT THOU ENJOY-ESTEST IT--THE *FINEST* SPINACH PIE IN THE *LAND!*

ER. YEAH, THANKS.

"ENJOYESTEST" WHERE DO THEY *FIND* THESE PEOPLE?

NICE PIES, THOUGH.

BUT, LOOK, SLAVERY WAS ILLEGAL IN ENGLAND. A SLAVE WHO SET FOOT ON BRITISH SOIL WAS AUTOMATICALLY FREE, RIGHT?

WELL, SORT OF. YEAH.

"SO, STOP WORRYING. THE AMERICANS HAVE MORE TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT THAN THE ENGLISH."

"NO, SOME OF THE ENGLISH... *WE* OWNED AND RAN THE SLAVE SHIPS. YOU'D RUN SLAVES TO THE COLONIES, TRADE THEM FOR COTTON AND MOLASSES...

"SELL THE COTTON IN ENGLAND, TURN THE MOLASSES INTO RUM WHICH YOU USE TO BUY THE NEXT SHIPMENT OF SLAVES. THE ***PROFITS*** WERE ***ENOR-MOUS.*** YOU'RE TALKING, ***WHAT,*** SEVENTY THOUSAND POOR SODS A YEAR HAULED ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, FOR DECADES..."

"BUT THE ENGLISH OUTLAWED THE SLAVE TRADE."

"***EVENTUALLY.*** AND IT GOT WORSE WHEN THEY DID. I MEAN, YOU ONLY NEEDED ONE VOYAGE IN THREE TO MAKE A PROFIT. SO YOU COULD AFFORD TO ***DUMP*** YOUR CARGO TWO OUT OF THREE TIMES, IF THE WEATHER GOT TOO BAD, OR IF YOU SPOTTED A BRITISH MAN O' WAR...

"YOU THROW THE FIRST FEW OVERBOARD. THEY WERE ALL CHAINED TOGETHER, SO THE REST OF THEM FOLLOWED... I HAVE ***DREAMS*** ABOUT THAT, GWEN. THE FACES UNDER THE WATER..."

ROBBIE, BABY, YOU ARE *NOT* RESPONSIBLE FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM. ANYWAY, THE SLAVES WERE ALL TAKEN SLAVES BY OTHER AFRICAN TRIBES.

YOU SOUND JUST LIKE ME.

*DON'T* CHANGE THE SUBJECT. THEY WOULD HAVE TAKEN THOSE SLAVES *ANYWAY.*

NOT IN THOSE QUANTITIES. IT'S ALL *SUPPLY* AND *DEMAND.* AND THEY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN DRAGGED HALFWAY ACROSS THE WORLD, THROUGH HELL, AND WORSE...

YOU CAN'T *IMAGINE* WHAT IT WAS LIKE, IN THE HOLD OF A SLAVER. THE SMELL ALONE... AND THE NOISES THEY'D MAKE...

WELL, I DON'T SEE WHY YOU THINK *YOU* CAN IMAGINE IT AND *I* CAN'T.

YEAH. POINT.

ROBBIE? I'VE *GOTTA* BE THE FIRST BLACK WOMAN YOU'VE DATED.

ER. HOW CAN YOU TELL?

'COS IF YOU'D PULLED THIS SHIT ON A SISTER BEFORE NOW SHE'D'VE *KILLED* YOU ALREADY. IN SELF-DEFENSE.

WHAT BROUGHT *THAT* ON? I THOUGHT THE ARISTOCRACY WEREN'T ALLOWED TO BE SEEN FRATERNISING WITH THE PATRONS.

MM. YOU *NEEDED* IT.

TELL THE *TRUTH,* I DIDN'T *USED* TO THINK SLAVERY WAS SUCH A BAD THING. THEN THIS FRIEND OF MINE SPOKE TO ME ABOUT IT.

*"IT IS A POOR THING TO ENSLAVE ANOTHER..."* THAT WAS HOW HE PUT IT...

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FRIEND?

HE *DIED.*

"WHEN I *FIRST* MET YOU I THOUGHT YOU WERE GAY."

"*WHY?* 'COS I'M ENGLISH?

"UH-UH. BECAUSE YOU SEEMED TO KNOW SO MANY PEOPLE WHO WERE DEAD."

"...THAT'S NOT FUNNY."

"NO. IT'S NOT, IS IT?"

OKAY. IT'S THE OPENING PARADE NOW. THEN THERE'S A FEAST AT MIDDAY, AND I'LL BE NEEDED FOR THAT. BUT YOU'VE GOT A COPY OF MY GRID. ASK ANYONE.

I'LL JUST WANDER ROUND AND AMUSE MESELF, IF THAT'S ALL RIGHT WITH YOU.

PRINTER AND PAPERMAKER

VISA

ye Hu SAL

THESE BOOKS ARE ALL *BLANK*.

BEST *KIND*. Y'CAN WRITE ANYTHING IN THEM. ANY BOOK IN THE WORLD STARTS WITH BLANK PAGES. WRITE YOUR DREAMS OR POEMS, SECRETS OR RECIPES. HAND BOUND. HAND SEWN. I *MAKE* THE PAPER AND I *TAN* THE LEATHER.

YEAH. GWEN SAID.

YOU'RE GUENEVERE'S BOYFRIEND, THEN.

YEAH.

WHAT'S Y'*NAME*?

ROBBIE. ROBBIE GADLING.

THAT'S WHAT GUENEVERE SAID.

THERE WAS A ROBT. GADLING, WHO WAS A BOOKBINDER AND PRINTER BACK A FEW HUNDRED YEARS. MADE *WONDERFUL* BOOKS. ANY RELATION?

COULD BE.

YOU STAY THERE. LET ME *SHOW* YOU SOMETHING.

*HERE* Y'GO. EACH OF THESE IS A GENUINE GADLING AND COMPANY BOOK. I PAID THE MOON AND STARS FOR THEM, BUT IF YOU'RE A SERIOUS BOOKBINDER, Y'GOT TO SEE HOW THEY DID IT IN THE OLD DAYS.

THOSE *OLD* FELLERS, THEY MUST'VE FOR*GOTTEN* MORE ABOUT BOOK BINDING AND PRINTING THAN *SOME* OF US'LL EVER *KNOW*.

COULD BE.

LOOK AT THIS--*CARE*FUL, NOW. IT COST ME A HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS.

IT'S SIGNED TO *SOMEONE*, BUT I CAN'T READ THE NAME. *LESLIE* OR *LAURIE*, MAYBE.

*LAUREL*.

LAUREL...? HM. Y'KNOW, IT *COULD* BE A LAUREL AT THAT.

HERE'S THE BOOK BACK. YOU... YOU'RE DOING A GOOD JOB. *NICE* BOOKBINDING.

I'M SURE EVEN THE *OLD* ROB GADLING WOULD'VE BEEN IMPRESSED.

I'LL UH. SEE YOU AROUND.

SILLY OLD BUGGER.

PITCHETH IN

EXCUSE ME, *MILORD*? ARE YOU OKAY?

WHERE'S THE *PUB*?

*HUH*?

EVEN IN THIS HALF-ARSED MEDIEVAL MILTON KEYNES THERE'S GOT TO BE *SOME*WHERE A MAN CAN GET A PINT OF BEER.

*SURE IS*. THERE'S A BEER BOOTH OVER THERE, AND THEN THERE'S A BEER TENT BY THE OLD INN...

IT'S ALL BOLLOCKS! IT'S ALL STUPID BLOODY BUGGERING BOLLOCKS.

HEY.

YOU'RE GWEN'S BOYFRIEND.

THASS RIGHT. AND YOU'RE THE TWAT WITH THE SHEEP.

YEAH. LAMB. LET'S SEE HIM.

LAMB.

UH...

I'M NOT GOING TO HURT HIM. SHOW US. WHAT'S HE MADE OF?

HAR! HE'S A VEGETABLE LAMB! YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS?

I, COTTON, FELT, MAYBE, I, uh, I DON'T...

NOT REALLY.

WHEN I WAS... WELL, IN THE OLDEN DAYS, THEY USED TO TELL OF SOMETHING CALLED A VEGETABLE LAMB. IT WAS A LAMB THAT GREW ON A BUSH, COVERED WITH WOOL. ITS BLOOD WAS GREEN SAP. IT COULDN'T MOVE ABOUT OR ANYTHING. BUT YOU COULD SHEAR IT.

THIS THING... YOU KNOW WHAT IT WAS?

UH--

RIGHT! A COTTON BUSH! A STUPID BLOODY COTTON BUSH! I MEAN, THAT WAS HOW PEOPLE WHO'D SEEN ONE DESCRIBED IT, YOU KNOW, A HUGE GAME OF CHINESE WHISPERS -- Y'KNOW, "TELEPHONE" -- SEND THREE AND FOURPENCE, THE CAVALRY IS GOING TO A DANCE --

Eh, MEESTER. You are DRONK on a Sonday MORNINK.

DRUNK? ME? I'M NOT YET IN THE LAND OF THE DRUNK. BUT I CAN SEE IT WITHOUT A TELESCOPE, IF YOU GET MY DRIFT, MY FUZZY LITTLE FRIEND.

RIGHT.

MY VEGETABLE LAMB WILL GROW VASTER THAN EMPIRES AND MORE SLOW. AND ALL THE POOR BASTARDS GOT DRAGGED ACROSS THE ATLANTIC TO PICK THE DAMNED STUFF, IF THEY WERE LUCKY...

ARE WE GOING THE RIGHT WAY TO THE BEER TENT?

OVER HERE...

YOU KNOW WHAT'S **WRONG** WITH THIS PLACE?

UH...

WELL, THE **FIRST** THING THAT'S WRONG IS THERE'S NO **SHIT.** I MEAN, **THAT'S** THE THING ABOUT THE PAST PEOPLE FORGET. ALL THE SHIT. ANIMAL SHIT. PEOPLE SHIT. COW SHIT. HORSE SHIT. YOU **WADED** THROUGH THE STUFF...

YOU SHOULD **SPRAY** 'EM ALL WITH SHIT AS THEY COME THROUGH THE GATES.

NO **LICE.** NO **NITS.**

NO ROTTING FACE CANCERS. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW SOMEONE WITH A BLOODY GREAT TUMOR HANGING OFF THEIR FACE?

UH...

EXACTLY.

IT'S **ALL** BOLLOCKS. YOU WANT A DRINK?

NO.

IF YOU SEE GWEN, TELL HER I'M HERE. ALL RIGHT?

WILL DO.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

THEY CALL ME CORDELIA, MILORD.

NO, THEY DON'T. AND I BET IN REAL LIFE YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE THAT, NEITHER.

ANYWAY, CORDELIA, I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU THESE TWO FIFTY DOLLAR BILLS.

YOU, FOR YOUR PART, WILL BRING ME BEER. AND I NEVER WANT TO HEAR YOU SHOUT "HUZZAH TWENTY POUNDS FOR THE KING" AGAIN.

OR HEAR ANYTHING ELSE OUT OF YOU.

DON'T CALL ME THEE OR THOU OR MILORD OR ANY OF THAT. JUST BRING BEER.

AND IF SOME WIGHT WHO FANCIES HIMSELF A MINSTREL LOOKS LIKE HE'S COMING ME-WARDS TO PLAY A GLADSOME MELODY, THEN HEAD HIM OFF BEFORE HE GETS HERE OR I'M LIABLE TO SHOVE HIS LUTE WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE.

AND WHEN I HAVE FINISHED DRINKING MY BEER, YOU GET TO KEEP WHATEVER'S LEFT FROM THE HUNDRED.

GOT IT?

GOT IT, BOSS.

THAT'S ME GIRL.

IT'S PROBABLY COLD BEER, ISN'T IT?

YOU CAN LET IT WARM UP.

IT'S NOT THE SAME.

I THOUGHT YOU'D *GONE.*

*NAH.* JUST WENT OFF TO EMPTY ME BLADDER.

*HA!* A *TOUCH!* A VERITABLE *STING!*

ANOTHER GLASS OF YOUR LOATHSOME, VAGUELY BEERISH FROZEN SWILL, IF YOU PLEASE.

WE STRIVE FOR REALISM.

THOSE *TOILETS* ARE PRETTY BLOODY DIS-*GUST*ING.

COMING RIGHT UP.

*HEY.* IT'S ALMOST *MIDDAY,* AND I SHOULD PROBABLY WARN YOU THAT FOUR HUGE HAIRY GUYS WITH GUITARS ARE DUE TO START BELTING OUT LUSTY MADRIGALS HERE AT TWELVE.

THANKS FOR THE WARNING.

WHAT'S IN *THERE?*

YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE. IT'S BEEN CON-DEMNED. IT'S ALL CLOSED UP.

AH...

GROG

CONDEMNED
BY
ORDER
OF THE
KING

BY
of the
KING

HI. DO YOU MIND IF I JOIN YOU?

YOU DON'T *SING*, DO YOU?

TO MYSELF, SOMETIMES. NOT IN PUBLIC.

WELL, COME OVER HERE, THEN. SIT DOWN. HAVE A DRINK. YOU CAN SIT NEXT TO ME.

IT'S OKAY, I'M NOT GOING TO BITE YOU.

JUST A LITTLE BIT *TIDDLY*, THAT'S ALL. HARDLY EVEN *THAT*, REALLY. I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S THIS PISS BEER, OR IF IT'S THE MOOD I'M IN, BUT I'M GETTING *NO* DRUNKER, FOR ALL THAT I'VE BEEN DRINKING.

YOU'RE NOT HERE WITH THE FESTIVAL, ARE YOU?

NOT REALLY.

I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE, HAVEN'T I?

MANY TIMES, YES.

YOU'VE GOT TO BE A REAL HEARTBREAKER.

WELL, DON'T TELL ME. I'LL REMEMBER IN A MINUTE. NEVER FORGET A FACE, ME.

*THAT'S* BOLLOCKS FOR A START. I'VE FORGOTTEN MORE FACES...

I'M SURPRISED I'D FORGET *YOURS*, THOUGH...

WHEN YOU CAME IN, I THOUGHT YOU WERE AMERICAN. AND NOW YOU SOUND, I DUNNO. MORE ENGLISH.

BUT NOT REALLY ENGLISH.

MORE LIKE SOMETHING I HEARD A *LONG* TIME AGO...

SO HOW ARE YOU ENJOYING THE RENFEST?

THE RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL? I FEEL LIKE BILLY THE KID WOULD HAVE FELT AT A SOUTH LONDON WILD WEST SHOW. IT'S LIKE CHEWING ON SILVER FOIL. 'ORRIBLE. I DUNNO WHAT GWEN SEES IN IT.

THIS ISN'T HISTORY. IT'S NOT THE PAST. IT'S A MOLDERING GREAT LUMP OF NOW.

THAT'S WHAT I THINK. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL. ALL THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE HERE: THE ONES WHO LIKE DRESSING UP, AND THE SINGERS, AND THE CRAFTSMEN, AND THE STREET THEATER. AND ALL THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO COME TO SEE IT AND HAVE A GREAT DAY OUT.

THEY'RE ALL HAVING A MARVELOUS TIME.

IT'S GREAT.

WELL, THANK YOU, LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE.

AND I SUPPOSE IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU THAT THE PAST WAS NEVER LIKE THIS? NAH.

WHY SHOULD IT?

YOU WEREN'T THERE. WHAT DO YOU CARE?

I CARE.

AND I WAS THERE, HOB. I REMEMBER.

WHO ARE YOU?

YOU KNOW ME, HOB GADLING.

YOU WERE A FRIEND OF MY BROTHER'S.

I... I'VE KNOWN A LOT OF PEOPLE, GIRLIE.

YOU USED TO MEET HIM FOR A DRINK. ONCE A CENTURY.

SO HE *IS* DEAD. I HAD A DREAM, BACK IN JANUARY. I DREAMED HE'D DIED. I KNEW IT WAS A TRUE DREAM.

YES.

SO WE WON'T BE MEETING IN 94 YEARS. IT'S FUNNY: I KNEW IT WAS TRUE, MY DREAM. I *KNEW* IT. BUT HEARING IT FROM YOU...

SO YOU WERE HIS SISTER. LET ME LOOK AT YOU.

I *KNOW* YOU. YOU WERE IN MY DREAM: IT COMES BACK TO ME NOW. AND I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE.

HE WAS THE KING OF DREAMS, YOU KNOW.

YEAH. I FIGURED THAT BIT OUT, EVENTUALLY.

SO WHAT ARE *YOU*? THE *QUEEN* OF *LOVE*? YOU'RE *PRETTY* ENOUGH.

NO.

*NO*. I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. WHY ARE YOU HERE?

TO *TALK*. I THOUGHT I *OWED* IT TO YOU. OR TO HIM, MAYBE.

YOU WANT TO FIND OUT IF THAT'S *IT*, EH? IF I'M READY TO CALL IT A DAY?

AM I *RIGHT*?

KIND OF.

I DON'T KNOW... DEATH'S A *FUNNY* THING.

I USED TO THINK IT WAS A BIG, SUDDEN THING, LIKE A HUGE OWL THAT WOULD SWOOP DOWN OUT OF THE NIGHT AND CARRY YOU OFF.

I DON'T ANYMORE.

I THINK IT'S A *SLOW* THING. LIKE A THIEF WHO COMES TO YOUR HOUSE DAY AFTER DAY, TAKING A LITTLE THING HERE AND A LITTLE THING THERE, AND ONE DAY YOU WALK ROUND YOUR HOUSE AND THERE'S NOTHING THERE TO KEEP YOU, NOTHING TO MAKE YOU WANT TO STAY.

AND THEN YOU LIE DOWN AND SHUT UP FOR EVER.

LOTS OF LITTLE DEATHS UNTIL THE LAST BIG ONE.

AND?

IT'S AN IDEA I'VE HEARD BEFORE.

"AND... SUPPOSE I *DO* CHUCK IT ALL IN. WHAT HAPPENS *THEN*? YOU GOING TO TELL ME THAT?"

WHAT IS IT? *HEAVEN? HELL? REINCARNATION?* THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUND? OR JUST PAIN AND DARKNESS AND NOTHING AT ALL...

WHAT DO *YOU* BELIEVE, HOB?

ME? I S'POSE I'M WITH OLD KIPLING ON THIS ONE.

THEY WILL COME BACK, COME BACK AGAIN, AS LONG AS THE RED EARTH ROLLS. HE NEVER WASTED A TREE OR A LEAF. WHY SHOULD HE SQUANDER SOULS?

IS *THAT* THE TRUTH OF IT? DO WE COME BACK AGAIN?

YOU'LL FIND OUT, HOB.

SO, IS THIS IT? *GAME OVER? ALL DONE?*

MAYBE.

AND IF IT IS?

THEN THEY'LL FIND YOU SLUMPED OVER YOUR BEER.

IT'S *FUNNY*. I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT, NO MATTER WHEN I FINALLY GAVE IT ALL UP, *HE'D* STILL KEEP GOING, YOUR BROTHER. HE WAS SO MUCH *OLDER* THAN ME. SO MUCH *SMARTER*, TOO.

BUT *HE* GAVE IT UP, AND I'M STILL HERE.

HE WASN'T THE *ONLY* CONSTANT THING IN THE WORLD. BUT ALMOST. *AND* I LIKED HIM.

THIS PLACE CAN'T BE MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS OLD, AND THEY'VE *ALREADY* CONDEMNED IT AS UNSAFE. IT'S THE ONLY PLACE THAT ACTUALLY REMINDS ME OF THE *OLD* DAYS...

THERE'D BE AN AWFUL NEATNESS TO DYING HERE, WOULDN'T THERE? GOING ON TO WHATEVER IT IS ONE GOES ON TO. LIKE COMING FULL CIRCLE...

IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT, HOB? IF IT IS, I CAN GIVE IT TO YOU. JUST TAKE MY HAND.

I APPRECIATE THE OFFER. I REALLY *DO*.

BUT I DON'T THINK SO, LOVE, THANKS.

I'M NOT READY TO DIE. NOT TODAY. NOT YET. MAYBE NOT EVER...

ANYWAY, GWEN'D KILL ME.

ROBBIE? ARE YOU OKAY? WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?

...GWEN?

DELIA SAYS YOU DISGRACED YOURSELF.

'S PERFECTLY POSSIBLE. TO TELL THE TRUTH, I FEEL A BIT ROUGH. WHAT TIME IS IT?

'BOUT FIVE THIRTY. I'M FINISHED FOR THE DAY. C'MON, SLEEPYHEAD.

IT'S RAINING.

THANKS, DELIA. I FOUND HIM.

NO PROBLEM, HON. IF I'D KNOWN HE WAS YOURS, I WOULDNA TAKEN ALL HIS MONEY.

HOW MUCH DID YOU GIVE HER?

THAT, MILADY, IS BETWEEN ME AND MISS CORDELIA.

SO WHO WAS THE GIRL?

GIRL?

BRANT SAID HE LOOKED IN AND YOU WERE TALKING TO A GIRL.

YEAH. SHE WAS THE SISTER OF A FRIEND OF MINE FROM THE OLD COUNTRY.

FUNNY, YOU RUNNING INTO HER HERE.

NOT REALLY. I THINK SHE GETS AROUND A LOT.

YE OLD CASH MACHINE

THIS IS *GREAT*.

WHAT?

THE *WEATHER*. NOW *THIS* IS PROPER WEATHER: CHILLY AND WET.

WHAT IS *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

I *KNOW* THESE THINGS, GWENNY. I WAS *THERE*. I'M OLDER THAN I LOOK. OLD AS METHUSALEM.

GEDDOFF. YOU'RE *SOAKING*.

AND YOU *LOVE* IT!

*ROB*BIE!

MOST OF THE OLDEN DAYS HAPPENED IN THE RAIN. THEY DON'T TELL YOU *THAT* IN THE HISTORY BOOKS.

STOPPED RAINING, PITY.

SO, WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

GOING FOR A DRINK AT THE MEAD BOOTH. I SAID I'D MEET A FEW PEOPLE. YOU WANT TO COME?

MM. MAYBE. BUT I THINK I'LL STOP DRINKING FOR A FEW HUNDRED YEARS.

ROBBIE, YOU'RE SO *FUNNY*. TALKING AS IF YOU'RE THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD. I'VE SEEN YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE. YOU'RE 32.

WHO'RE YOU GOING TO BELIEVE, *ME* OR A *DRIVING LICENSE*?

YOU CHAT TO YOUR FRIENDS. I'M GOING TO SIT AND HAVE A BIT OF A THINK.

THE *LAST* TIME YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO HAVE A *THINK* WAS ON THE WAY BACK FROM THE THEATER, AND YOU WENT STRAIGHT OFF TO SLEEP.

*RUBBISH*. I WERE THINKING.

YOU WERE *SNORING*.

THINK WELL, MY LOVE.

C'MON, ROBBIE. YOU'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR AN HOUR. TIME TO GO HOME.

UH?

DID YOU DO A LOT OF THINKING?

NOT REALLY. I FELL ASLEEP.

HAH. PLEASANT DREAMS?

ACTUALLY, YEAH. IT *WAS* A GOOD DREAM. *FUNNY*, THOUGH.

I DREAMED OF THE FRIEND I TOLD YOU ABOUT. THE *DEAD* ONE. WE WERE ON THIS BEACH, TOGETHER.

I REMEMBER BEING SURPRISED TO MEET HIM.

"THEN THIS OTHER BLOKE JOINED US.

"I'M NOT SURE WHO *HE* WAS, THE OTHER BLOKE. HE WAS A BIT LIKE A PAVEMENT ARTIST I MET, AGES AGO... NICE CHAP. BLOODY USELESS ARTIST, THOUGH.

"AND WE WERE GOING ON A JOURNEY.

"AND BEFORE WE WENT, I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING I HAD TO *ASK* HIM. BUT I REMEMBERED THAT HE WAS DEAD, AND *THEN* I KNEW THAT I MUST BE DREAMING.

"SO I SAID TO HIM, '*YOU'RE DEAD, AREN'T YOU? AND THIS IS JUST A DREAM.*'

"AND HE NODDED, AND WE STARTED LAUGHING. WELL, ME AND THE PAVEMENT ARTIST WERE LAUGHING, ANYWAY.

"AND THEN THE THREE OF US WENT OFF TOGETHER, INTO THE SUNSET, INTO THE END OF THE STORY.

"AND THEN YOU WOKE ME UP."

SWEET DREAM. SO, WHAT *WAS* IT?

WHAT WAS *WHAT*?

THE *END* OF THE *STORY*.

WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO END A STORY, REALLY.

DON'T TELL ME: *THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER?*

*THAT'S* THE ONE.

I HAD A *LOVELY* DAY TODAY, GWENNY. THANKS.

YOU *WHAT?* I WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND YOU, ROBBIE GADLING. NOT IF I LIVE TO BE A *THOUSAND*.

WELL, STRANGER THINGS *HAVE* HAPPENED.

NAY

PM.

OW, GWEN! YOU *KNOW* I'M TICKLISH!

Finis

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
#1 BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

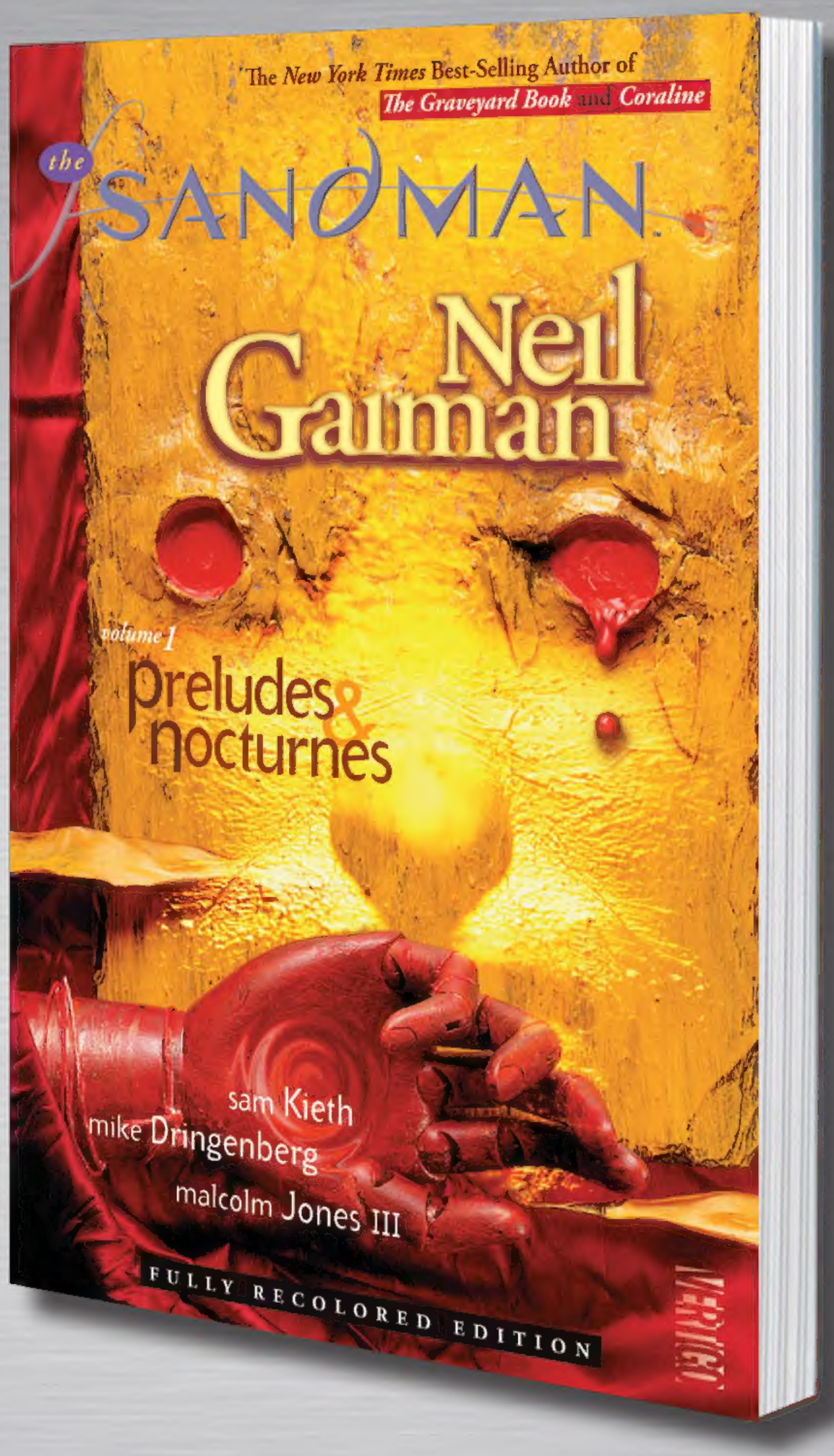
# NEIL GAIMAN

*"What Gaiman has written is a comics masterpiece."*
**– PUBLISHERS WEEKLY**

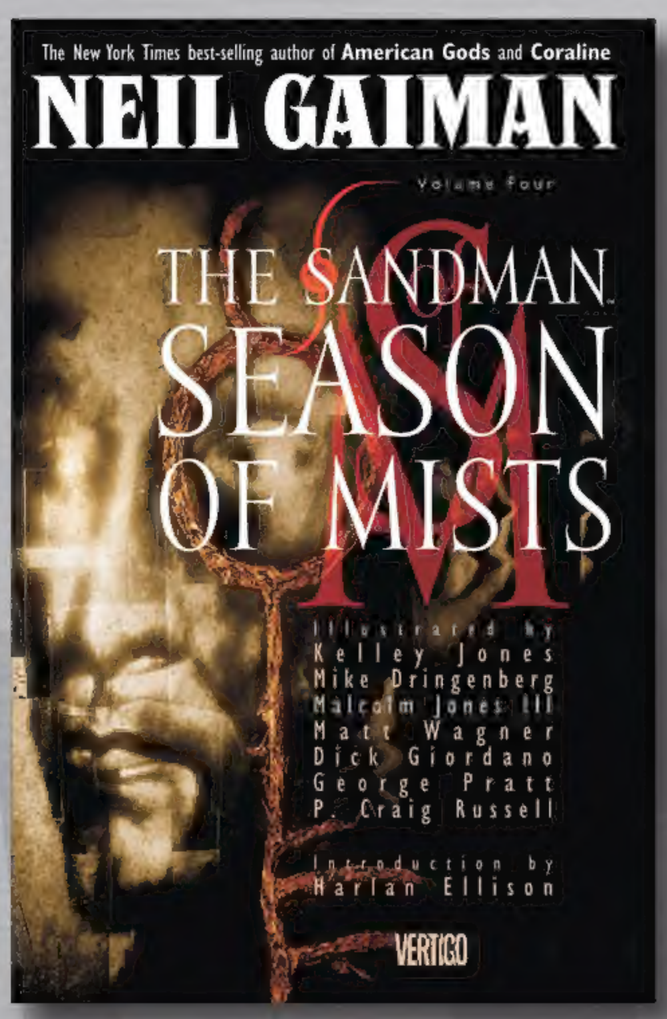
*"SANDMAN just might be the smartest comic book ever written."*
**– USA TODAY**

*"The landmark comic-book series that actually made death seem cool."*
**– ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY**

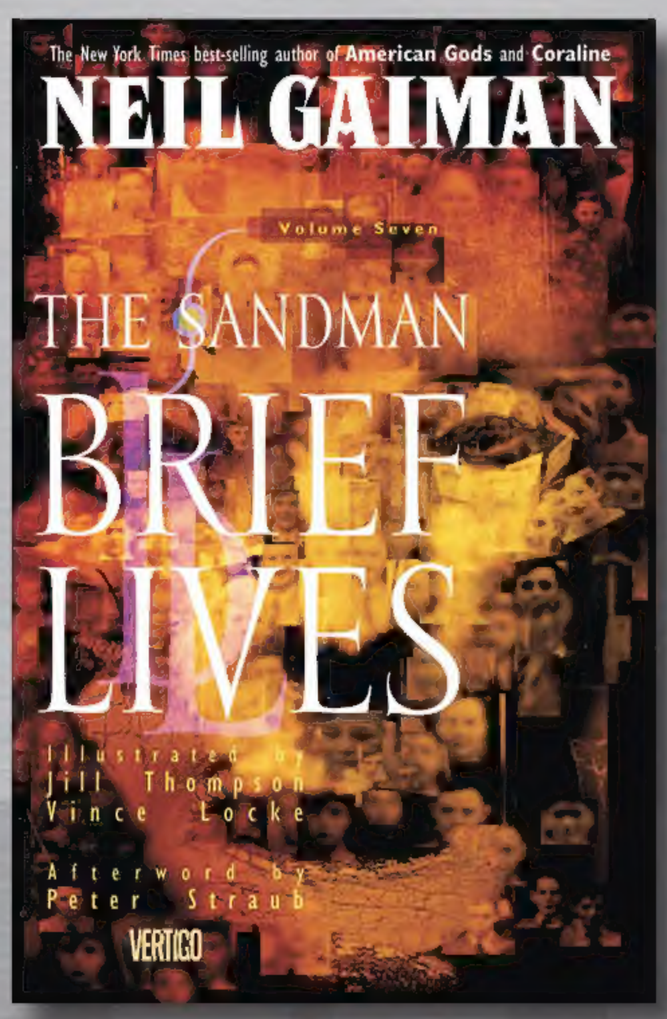
*"This is the stuff dreams are made of."*
**– IGN.com**



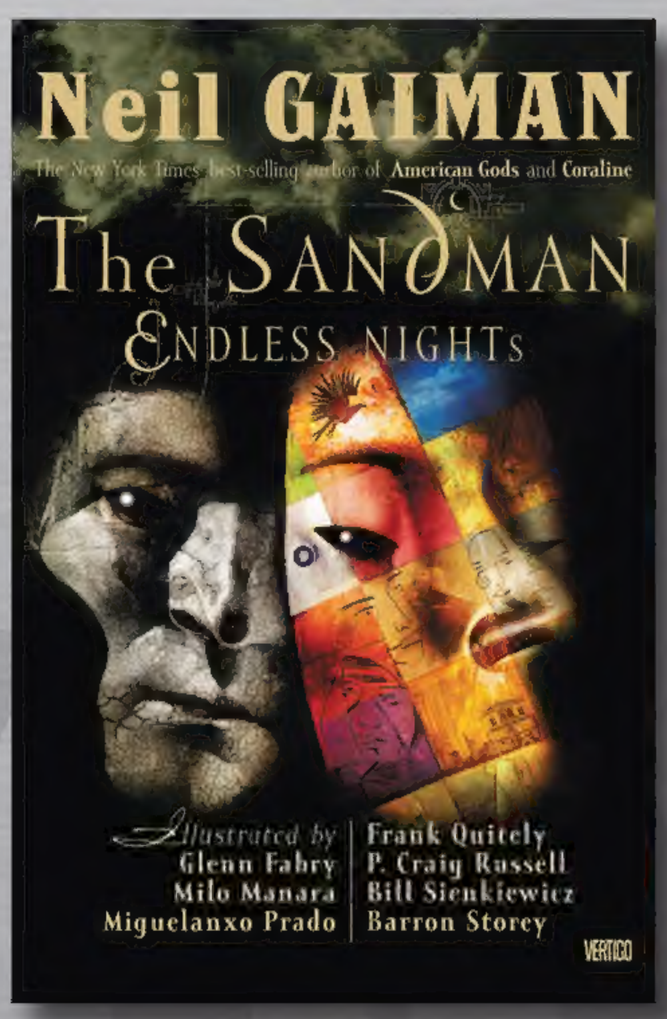

THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS




THE SANDMAN VOL. 7:
BRIEF LIVES




THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS




Use the **BUY IN PRINT** feature to find a comics shop near you.
Check back here every week for **NEW DIGITAL RELEASES**!

Suggested for Mature Readers

# SON OF ULTRON